



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Billings Field Office
5001 Southgate Drive, PO Box 36800
Billings, Montana 59107-6800



IN REPLY TO:
4700

July 29, 2005

Dear Interested Party:

In order to manage for healthy horses on healthy rangelands, I have made the decision to apply fertility control to 20 age-specific older wild mares (11 years of age and older). Given the current status of rangeland health on the Pryors, our management objective is to partially suppress herd growth in efforts to manage the herd closer to the existing appropriate management level (AML) of $95 \pm 10\%$ horses. Natural mortality in the younger and older horses (including the unpredictable impacts of predation), coupled with the proposed level of fertility control, is expected to assist with this objective, without taking the herd below AML.

Current estimates (7/27/05) place the population at 167 horses, including 28 live foals. Under the proposed action, the 20 mares would receive a primer and one booster dose of an immunocontraceptive Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) vaccine. Seven of these older mares (15 years and older) were previously treated with PZP and will only receive a booster vaccine this summer. The remotely-delivered PZP two-shot application is expected to offer 90% efficacy for at least one year in these older mares. Since mares are boosted after the breeding season in the Pryors, the vaccine is not effective until the following breeding season (2006) and will impact foal production two years later (2007).

The proposed action was described in the Environmental Assessment (EA) #MT-010-05-16. This document was released for a 30-day comment period and BLM received one hundred and six documents (232 pages of comments). This EA and the attendant Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact (DR/FONSI) are available by contacting the Billings Field Office (BiFO) or by accessing the national BLM website http://www.blm.gov/nhp/spotlight/state_info/mt/pryor.html.

PZP remote-delivery implementation is scheduled to begin in September 2005 and will continue until all mares have received a booster of PZP vaccine. The beginning of remote-delivery activities will be communicated to the public via timely press releases or information can be obtained by contacting BiFO. If conditions warrant, and animal health or welfare is in jeopardy at any time, remote-darting operations would be delayed or halted.

Any person who feels adversely affected by this decision may file an appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary. Please refer to section X. APPEALS of the Decision Record for information regarding procedures for appeal.

Thank you for your interest in the PMWHR. If you have questions concerning the DR/FONSI, please contact Linda Coates-Markle, State Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, at (406) 896-5013.

Sincerely,

Sandra S. Brooks
Field Manager